

Francis J. Dewes House
(now Swedish Engineers' Society)
503 West Wrightwood Avenue
southwest corner of West Wrightwood
Avenue and North Hampden Street
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1043

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
45-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

FRANCIS J. DEWES HOUSE
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Location: 503 West Wrightwood Avenue, southwest corner of West Wrightwood Avenue and North Hampden Street, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner and Occupant: Swedish Engineering Society of Chicago.

Present Use: Club-House.

Statement of Significance: The house was built for a wealthy Chicago brewer, Francis J. Dewes, shortly after the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. The elaborate exterior was designed in a Central European Baroque Revival style, while the interior displays a wide range of extravagant architectural decoration, almost all of which remains original and unusually well preserved.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lot 5 of H. M. Hobart's Subdivision of lots 15 to 19 inclusive and the alley southwest of and adjacent to lots 17, 18, and 19 in Subdivision of Blocks 1 and 2 of Out lot A of Wrightwood, being a Subdivision of the southwest quarter of Section 28-40-14. Recorded November 27, 1860.

The following is based on the chain of title recorded in Book 560, pp. 49-51, 247, in the Cook County Recorder's Office: On April 2, 1894, Francis J. Dewes purchased lots 4, 5 and the E. 15' of 3 from Helga A. Haugen, executor for the estate of Henry M. Hobart (Document 2017644). The property was taken over from Dewes by its present owners, the Swedish Engineering Society, on July 1, 1920 (Document 7191929).

(Note: The Society occupies the mansion situated on lot 5; another smaller house, west of the mansion at 509 Wrightwood Avenue, was built on the original Dewes land parcel by August Dewes, brother of Francis.)

2. Date of erection: 1894-1896.
3. Architect: Adolph Cudell and Arthur Hercz. Little is known

of Cudell and Hercz, and the degree to which each participated in the design of the Dewes Mansion. Below is a biographical sketch of each man:

"Of the lesser luminaries who shone through the dying smoke of the Fire, none was more interesting than Adolph Cudell, who hailed from Aix La Chapelle, and came to Chicago immediately after the fire. The firm was known as Cudell and Blumenthal. Richard E. Schmidt began his distinguished architectural career in Cudell's office as a draughtsman. He describes him as a handsome man with black hair in Apollo-like ringlets, and as a draughtsman of ability with meticulous technique. He introduced a great deal of Greek detail into his buildings, but Schmidt says he doesn't think they were inspired by the Neo-Grec, fashionable in Paris in the fifties, but by Greek architecture direct, and cites from his memory Stuart and Revett's Antiquities of Athens and Boetticher's Tektonic der Hellenen, etc., as having been in his library. Cudell later became a designer and manufacturer of fine cabinet work and furniture. It was said that many places of entertainment on the North Side took pride in the possession of various pieces from the hand of Cudell, obtained in his later years as payment in kind.

"Aldine Square was a famous work by Cudell, as also was the Perry H. Smith house on Pine and Huron. He likewise built a row of houses on Indiana Avenue between Sixteenth and Eighteenth on the west side of the street, now destroyed. His chef d'oeuvre, however, was the Cyrus McCormick house still standing at 675 Rush Street."

/Thomas E. Tallmadge, Architecture in Old Chicago (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941), pp. 118-119./

Hercz, Arthur, Architect, born in Bacska, Hungary around 1866, studied since 1885 in Vienna, where he founded the short-lived Kunstgewerbe Journal in 1888. Later he studied in Germany where he became a recognized artist. As manager of a furniture manufacturing firm, he went to Chicago in 1882 where he participated in the planning and building of the Dewes Palace. Among other projects near Lake Michigan, he also built a villa in a Hungarian provincial style. In 1898, together with the sculptor, Max Mauch, he won the first prize in a competition initiated by the United States for Lafayette monuments in France.

/Thieme-Becker, Allgemeines Lexicon der Bildenden Kuenstler, Vol. 16 (Leipzig: Verlag von E. A. Seeman, 1923), p. 456. (translation)./

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Building permit 723, dated June 7, 1894, in Book J., July 1893 - December 1894, Department of Buildings, Chicago: "T. J. Dewes [sic] 3-story brick dwelling and barn, 45' front, 70' deep, irregular height. A Wrightwood Addition, Wrightwood and Hampton Ct., cost of permit \$10.50. (Permit S 4205, dated December 15, 1894, for 509 W. Wrightwood: August Dewes, 2-story brick dwelling, 25' front, 73' deep, 40' high, cost of permit -- \$5.50.)"

"Villa Dewes, 503 West Wrightwood, Chicago, plans by Arthur Hercz, architect." Filed under Chicago Dewes (Francis J.) House, pamphlet file, Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago:

Included are three sheets of photostatic copies of what appears to be original drawings, the location of which is unknown. These include the north and east elevations (mistitled "east" and "north" by the draftsman), and a section through the north elevation. The scale is 1/8 inch equals a foot. Each sheet is signed on the lower-right corner "Arthur Hercz, architect," and labeled "Villa Dewes."

There are several details shown in the drawings which were not included in the completed building. The northwest tower has an iron weather vane with the date "1898" on it; another iron vane shows the name "Dewes." The north elevation includes a projected carriage entry of stone attached to the east wall. The section shows this area with a canopy supported by ornamental iron brackets attached to the east wall. Among the other variants in architectural details present in these drawings are the additions of a broad porch and balustrade at the top of the main steps, with stone lions on either side.

See Supplementary Material for one description of the house.

5. Additions and alterations: Since the house has had but two owners, it is reasonably unaltered. In 1921, a new interior stairway was installed; in 1948, a fire-escape was added; and in 1953, the three story brick barn (or coachhouse) was wrecked (Building Permits 29954, A12702, A93879).

Inside, on the second floor, the wall between the southeast bedroom and the bedroom to the north was removed to create a single large room.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The building was the home of Francis J. Dewes; below is a biographical sketch of him:

Francis J. Dewes, proprietor of Dewes Brewery, established the business in 1882, erecting a fine brick structure and placing in it all the latest improvements for the manufacture of beer. The annual capacity of this plant is fifty thousand barrels. Mr. Dewes was born at Losheim, Rhenisch Prussia, on April 8, 1845, and is the son of Peter and Margurite (Zengerle) Dewes. His father, who was a brewer, was a member of the first German Parliament of 1848, held in Frankfort. He died in February 1876. Francis J. was educated at Cologne, Germany, graduating from the Realschule, First Ordnung, in 1861. After leaving the school he learned the trade of a brewer, and in February, 1868, came to Chicago and engaged as a bookkeeper for Rehm & Bartholomae, where he remained until 1870, and then accepted the same position with Busch & Brand, the firm changing in 1873, to Busch & Brand's Brewery Company.

Mr. Dewes taking stock in the new organization, was elected secretary and treasurer, and remained in that capacity until May 1, 1881, when he sold his stock and made a new trip to Germany with the intention of remaining there. In 1882, however, he returned to Chicago and built the brewery which he now so successfully manages. In 1876, he married Hattie Busch, of Detroit, Michigan. They have three children, - Irma, Edwin and Arthur. Dr. Dewes is a member of Waubansia Lodge, No. 160, A. F. & A. M.

C. Bibliography:

Andreas, A. T. History of Chicago, Vol. 3. Chicago: The A. T. Andreas Company, Publishers, 1886. p. 579.

Clark, Herma. "Stately Homes of Yesterday in Chicago," Townfolk, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1937). p. 24.

Filed under Chicago, Illinois Historic Houses, pamphlet file, Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.
See Supplementary Material.

Drury, John. Old Chicago Houses. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941. pp. 340-343.
Photograph.

History of the Swedish Engineers Building. Manuscript in the possession of Earl H. Reed, Chicago.
See Supplementary Material.

Loring, Kay. "Architectural Grandeur from '93 Fair Found in Old Mansion," Chicago Tribune, April 15, 1964.

Villa Dewes, 503 W. Wrightwood, Chicago, Plans by Arthur Hercz, Architect. Filed under Chicago. Dewes (Francis J.) House, pamphlet file, Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.

D. Supplementary Material:

1. "The architect was Arthur Hercz, a Hungarian who had come to the World's Fair of 1893 and lingered to do this work. It is a copy of a fine house he had built for a client in Buda-Pesth [sic]. The entire aspect of the interior is as striking as the exterior would lead one to expect. The great hall is literally one of marble wall; above the handsome fireplace at the foot of the staircase; hangs a tremendously large and very fine mirror; a fountain, with youthful figures pouring water, occupies a recess, at the end of the hall.

At the right, on entering, is the library, its woodwork Mahogany, much carved. After the manner of the time, the book-cases have glass doors. The reception-room, at the left of the hall, is hung in rose, silk damask. The ceiling is frescoed. The bay-window here (if bay-window it can be called. . .) is unusual, one supporting pillar being in the form of a standing figure. The mantel is especially handsome. The parlor back of this is handsome, with frescoed ceiling, walls hung in tapestry and fine woodwork.

The great butler's pantry has a white marble floor, as has the kitchen. The kitchen walls have a high white marble wainscoting, also. As one ascends the grand staircase, the eye is caught by the enormous stained glass window on the landing. Here at the landing, the staircase becomes double, a narrower stairway on each side leading to the second floor. On the third floor, the great ball-room is worth seeing, for, at the time the house was built, it was considered the finest in Chicago, where there were many ballrooms in private houses. At the far end, mirrors, between marble pillars, give evidence of a lavish expenditure of money.

Adjoining this mansion is that of the brother of the builder. August J. Dewes, who built the house at 509 Wrightwood Avenue at the time that his brother Francis erected the one described above, still occupies his old home, and a garden, enclosed by a high fence, separates the two."

[Herma Clark, loc. cit.]

2. History of Swedish Engineers' Building.

The building occupied by the Swedish Engineers' Society of Chicago at 503 Wrightwood Avenue, is known as FRANCIS J. DEWES - Mansion - a famous landmark of Chicago. The building was completed in early 1896, the architects were ADOLPH CUDELL, son of Aix La Chapelle and ARTHUR HERCZ. Cudell was one of the best known architects in the Chicago area having twenty years earlier designed the great French style mansion on Rush Street for Cyrus Hall McCormick. Hercz was reared and educated in Hungary. The building was commissioned by FRANCIS J. DEWES for his home. FRANCIS J. DEWES, was born in Losheim Rhenish Prussia in 1845 - the son of a brewer who became a member of the German Parliament. He came to Chicago in 1868, was engaged as a bookkeeper and went to work for the BUSCH & BRAND BREWING Company - he soon became secretary-treasurer for the firm and in 1876 married Miss Hedwig Busch and in 1882 established his own business. Becoming one of the foremost brewers in Chicago he then commissioned the building of his home.

Judged by modern standards, this mansion seems highly decorative, even grandiose - but in its day was, and still is, widely admired.

The mansion is three story Baroque style with two caryatids supporting the balcony over the main entrance. There are many figures and ornamental groups carved in the Bedford stone exterior of the building. Ornamental iron, hand wrought, forms the balconies, window trim, porches, and railings all in lavish detail of the Baroque style. There is a mansard roof with hand wrought copper fence surrounding same. The exterior of the building is considered to be Louis XV style that later spread to all the capitals of Europe. The large stained glass window which extends from the main stairway landing of the building up to the second floor is the work of a famous Belgian artist with figures and flowers in a springtime motif. The artist was engaged to design a window to fit the opening and came to Chicago especially to work out the details and return to Belgium to personally supervise the firing of the glass and making of the window. The result is a work of art that is noted in this field throughout the world.

On the first floor of the elegant interior of this building one immediately notices upon entering the foyer the huge fireplace on the East wall with marble columns facing the magnificent staircase leading to the second floor; im-

mediately ahead upon entering is the wishing well equipped with running water and the statue of the legendary girl and boy lovers. The floors are Italian Mosaic and Skagolia /sic - Scagliola/ marble beautifully arranged in panels with overlay of gilded ornamental plaster molding gracing the walls. Ornamental iron, hand wrought, is used as a decor on the stairway, as lighting fixtures and ornamentation. This work was executed in Germany by skilled craftsmen and exhibited at the Columbian Exposition in 1893 prior to being installed in the building. It received the grand prize of merit both for design and craftsmanship.

The library of Gothic architecture, was brought from Europe where it was designed and erected - then dismantled and shipped to Chicago to be erected again. This room is on the right as you enter the foyer. The wood paneling, ornamental beams, molding, and siding consist of East Indian mahogany with a French hand polished finish. The fireplace was removed from an old European castle and the woodwork designed and built around same. The walls above the dados are finished with exquisite gold and silk tapestry woven especially for this room.

The Drawing Room on the left as you enter is French Renaissance with ornamental hand sculptured gypsum figures, heavy relief moldings and cornices done in Baroque style. The Italian marble fireplace with a huge mirror covers East wall. The ceiling is canvas with landscape scenes and figures the work of several artists famous in this field. The wall panels are French Brocade especially woven in Europe for the family.

The Music Room East Indian Mahogany woodwork and French Silk tapestry walls and a Brazilian onyx polished marble fireplace is located between the Drawing Room and the Dining Room.

The Dining Room is of Flemish design - with quarter sawn Flemish Oak built and assembled in one of Chicago's own woodworking shops. The wood was imported and cured for a number of years then painstakingly designed, cut, and finished into wood beams, paneling and frames. The figures were designed in clay in Germany and shipped to Chicago where they were carved into wood by a process that is now almost unheard of. There is not the slightest crack or flaw that has developed in any of these pieces even after sixty years of exposure. The glass panels used in this room were imported from Venice and are of exquisite design.

The floors in the Library, Drawing Room, Music Room and

Dining Room are of the parquet type. The hardware, especially designed and cast for each room and the wrought iron pieces are an excellent example of the Craftsman's art and talent. The rooms are separated by heavy sliding oak doors.

The immediate impression of a visitor walking around this building is as though he were walking through some palace of the Bourbons or the Hapsburgs. The design decor and workmanship is of authentic, eighteen century grandeur, a type rarely created except in Europe.

SECOND FLOOR

The foyer of the second floor repeats that of the first floor in general design and finish with Skagolia [sic] marble framing, bottom panels, door arches. The panels from rail height to ceiling are finished in a woven wool and silk tapestry. The ceiling ornamental plaster with floral designs with heavy plaster cornices.

The Master Bedrooms are finished in smooth plaster walls and ceilings with ornamental relief. The entire woodwork is East Indian Mahogany with French polish. White oak parquet floors and the light fixtures designed especially for each room with no repetition.

THIRD FLOOR - BALLROOM

Covering two thirds of the third floor and of Louis XVI design one notices immediately the change of motif. The walls are paneled from rails to ceiling in wood heavily coated in a permanent type of enamel each panel being distinctly different. The beams, cornices, etc. are heavily ornamental relief plaster with Skagolia [sic] marble columns. The floors strip type tongue and groove white oak heavily waxed and polished. Upwards of two hundred people can be accommodated for dancing or banquets. There are adjoining service rooms and a dumb waiter connecting with the first floor so as to hurriedly speed food from the kitchen.

Throughout the building one notices the specially designed and built hardware for beauty as well as utilitarian purposes. The locks, with mechanical features, that are unique and built individually, the escutcheons, knobs, plates, etc. each of a particular design.

As one wanders through the building and studies each room one cannot help but realize that many years of talent, craftsmanship, and pride have been devoted to the edifice. Each workman, each artist, the designers and the architects put a special something of themselves into every piece, as a

result a mansion was built and is still standing to the credit of each.

As to the thoughts behind the man who conceived and commissioned the building - one can only wonder with one assurance - he wanted the very best.

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka
Historian
National Park Service
J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
September 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The elaborate exterior was designed in a Central European Baroque Revival style, while the interior displays a rare (in the United States) mixture of German, Austrian, and Hungarian-influenced architectural motifs.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 45' (north front) and 70' deep; approximately rectangular; three stories plus basement.
2. Foundations: Stone masonry.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Grey cut limestone face with sculptural and ornamental details in grey limestone.
4. Porches: The elaborate entrance porch at the north (front) is supported by two limestone caryatids, and approached by a straight run of ten risers.
5. Chimneys: One chimney on the east wall of the Parlor has two fireplaces (one on the first and one on the second floor). There is one chimney on the wall between the main staircase and the library for two fireplaces (one on the first and one on the second floor). A chimney on the east wall of the dining room has one fireplace. One chimney on the east wall

of the stairhall has two fireplaces (one on the first and one on the second floor).

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: A large double entrance door from the porch on the north (front) leads to the vestibule. Secondary entrances on the west side of the house open into the main stair hall, and on the south wall into a small alcove at the southeast corner of the dining room.
- b. Windows: Most windows are large one-over-one-light double-hung sash. A large stained glass window on the west wall at the main stair landing (between first and second floor) rises to the ceiling of the second floor. This window has a door in the center which originally opened onto a balcony which overlooked the courtyard on the west.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: A mansard roof is used on the front portion of the house, and goes as far back as the south wall of the main stair well. The remainder of the roof is flat.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is a copper cornice at the base of the mansard and a decorative stone cornice with a repetitive square carving on the rest of the house.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Large copper cupola caps the square, northeast corner bay of the house. There are bulls-eye windows in mansard - one on the west, one on the north and one on the east. A fourth bulls-eye window is located in the northeast wall of the northeast corner bay. A small tower on the southeast corner is capped by an elaborate copper roof above the stone cornice.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Basement - now houses furnace room, card room and bar.

First floor - on the west front is a highly developed Gothic Revival library and on the east an elaborately detailed parlor. A square bay, diagonal to this room, projects at the northeast corner. The opening into the bay is framed by an arched lintel which is supported by an ornate spiral

column on one side and a caryatid on the other. The entrance hall separates the library and the parlor, and leads to a large stair hall. On the south wall of this hall is a fountain and sculpture. The southeast corner of the first floor is the dining room; the west wall here has a medieval buffet and paneling detail, the east wall has a large fireplace with a mirror in the center, and the southeast corner is a small breakfast alcove. A small second parlor is located between the east (front) parlor and front dining room. The remainder of the first floor houses a kitchen and serving pantry.

The second floor consists of club-rooms, lounges, and rest rooms, which were originally bedrooms and bathrooms. It exists as it was originally designed, except for one partition; between the southeast bedroom and the bedroom to the north, the wall has been removed to make one large room.

Third floor - the third floor has a small bar and a large ballroom.

2. Stairways: The main stair, on the west side of the house, extends from the first to the second floor. It has one wide stair to the landing, and a smaller stair returning along either wall to the second floor. The stair railings are mahogany with elaborately detailed wrought-iron panels between the railing and the steps. A stair from the second floor to the third floor originates in the center of the house on the second floor south wall, at the south end of the very large hall. Between the kitchen and the main stairhall on the west side of the house is a small servant stair, extending from the basement to the third floor.
3. Flooring: There is mosaic tile in the entrance hall, main stair hall and dining room. Other flooring on the first and second floors is oak, laid in a herringbone pattern.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Interior wall finishes vary: library - gold tapestry; entrance hall and stairwell - yellow marble; remaining walls first and second floor - plaster with paintings on paper. Ceilings are wooden deck and beam in library and dining room; remaining ceilings are plaster with elaborately detailed mouldings and high relief of natural growth and birds; ballroom on third floor is wooden paneling painted a cream color, with floral decorations painted in recessed panels.
5. Doorways and doors: In the entrance hall and stairwell, mouldings are marble. In remaining areas of the house,

doors and doorways are wooden. The dining room has on the west wall two very heavy medieval doors with a circular stained glass panel.

6. Decorative features and trim: A highly developed marble surround exists on the stair hall fireplace. Large mirrors with delicate imitation of natural flora exist in stair hall, parlor and dining room.
7. Heating: Fireplaces and radiators in major rooms. Many radiators are concealed behind wrought-iron grills. A small, circular radiator with a marble top and wrought-iron grill is recessed in the chamfered wall of the north-east corner of the library.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The structure occupies a corner lot; the main entrance faces north on Wrightwood Avenue.
2. Outbuilding: A coachhouse with servants quarters was located at the rear (south end) of the site, and was removed in 1953.
3. Landscaping and walks: There is a side yard on the west; a public sidewalk abuts the east wall. A grass yard, enclosed by a tall wrought-iron fence with two gates (one near each house) separates the two buildings. There is heavy foliage on the outside of the fence.

Prepared by J. William Rudd
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June 1964